

PRESS RELEASE



For Immediate Release
Tuesday, April 12, 2016

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MAJOR EDUCATION MILESTONES REACHED IN GOV. SANDOVAL'S AGENDA TO ENSURE ACCOUNTABILITY AND REFORM

CARSON CITY, NV – Governor Brian Sandoval's 2015 Legislative agenda resulted in the passage of 25 bills to address underperforming schools and modernize the prek-12 education system in Nevada. Progress resulting from this education legislation during the past week:

- Jana Wilcox Lavin appointed Superintendent for the Achievement School District (ASD) position
- More than \$1 million awarded to 27 Nevada schools as part of the Underperforming Schools Turnaround grant
- The Nevada Board of Examiners approved a contract to help the Nevada Department of Education modernize educator licensure
- The Board of Examiners approved a contract between the Department of Education and Opportunity 180 to serve as a charter school harbormaster
- The Board of Examiners approved a contract with ACS Ventures, LLC to conduct the outcome based evaluations of seven education programs funded by the 2015 Legislature

"Governor Sandoval's vision for improving our schools includes accountability and measurable results," said Steve Canavero, Ph.D., Nevada Superintendent of Public Instruction. "Funding that is going to help schools rise out of underperforming status, the hiring of an innovative leader in this area and modernizing our educator licensure are all major steps toward making Nevada students college and career ready."

Wilcox Lavin will start on May 16 and will be located in the Las Vegas office of the Nevada Department of Education. This position is supported through private funding. She will be on contract with the United Way of Southern Nevada, and on loan to serve the Department of Education as the ASD Superintendent. She will be a member of Superintendent Canavero's executive team and a key partner in the Department of Education's efforts to improve outcomes for students.

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“Wilcox Lavin’s arrival is an extremely important milestone in Governor Sandoval’s mission to empower our communities with schools that our children deserve,” Canavero said. “By creating a sole purpose charter authorizer, the Governor described this as his line in the sand to convert these schools into high quality charter schools.”

Wilcox Lavin brings years of experience working in charter schools and specific expertise working in and with an achievement school district during her tenure with Scholar Academies, which focuses on turning around underperforming schools. She will leave her post as Interim Executive Director for the Memphis region and her role as Chief Program Officer where she developed programming and resources for schools to use to drive student achievement. She is a graduate of Tulane University (B.A.) and Emerson College (M.A.).

The \$1,058,313 that was awarded for the **Underperforming Schools Turnaround** grant was authorized by Senate Bill 515 in the 2015 Legislature. Twenty-seven schools in six Nevada districts and two State Charter Schools have received funding to assist in implementing school improvement plans. During the 2015 session, Governor Sandoval was successful in getting the Legislature to authorize \$5 million for the Nevada Department of Education to allocate funding to help schools identify and close existing achievement gaps.

Tuesday’s action by the Nevada Board of Examiners follows action taken by the Nevada Legislature for **educator licensure**. The \$58,000 contract with ACS Ventures will guide an educator licensure overhaul that will concentrate on national reciprocity, national licensure best practices and fee structures. This is expected to be completed by September, allowing time to properly inform the 2017 Legislature.

“Nevada has long faced a teacher shortage and this modernization will not only make us more efficient, it will allow us to recruit more qualified teachers to the state,” Canavero said.

The 2015 Legislature appropriated \$10 million to the department for a matching grant to a nonprofit organization to recruit and aid in the establishment and operation of high quality charter schools to serve children in communities who live in poverty and to aid in the recruitment and development of people to assume leadership roles in the formation and operation of such charters. These types of groups are often referred to as **charter school harbormasters**. Like maritime harbormasters that facilitate safe and cooperative navigation in a challenging space, charter school harbormasters build and coordinate the efforts to improve the charter school sector in their states.

Opportunity 180 will be a key partner with the Department in recruiting high-performing charter operators to run schools in the Achievement School District that will serve children who have been attending consistently underperforming schools.

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The Department of Education has entered into a \$354,000 contract with **ACS Ventures, LLC** to conduct the outcome based evaluations of seven education programs approved by the 2015 Legislature and implemented in the State of Nevada:

- Zoom Schools Program for limited English proficient students
- Victory Schools Program for students living in the poorest zip codes in Nevada
- Read by Grade Three Program which supports activities found to be effective in improving the academic achievement of students in reading
- Underperforming Schools Turnaround Program for consistently underperforming schools
- Social Workers Grants to Schools Program for at-risk schools
- Nevada Ready 21 Technology Program for professional development and student access to one-to-one technology
- Great Teaching and Leading Program for professional development and improvements to the educator pipeline.